

Bradford College
Reinspection of Basic Skills: March 2001
Report from the Inspectorate
The Further Education Funding Council

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

REINSPECTION

The FEFC has agreed that colleges with provision judged by the inspectorate to be less than satisfactory or poor (grade 4 or 5) should be reinspected. In these circumstances, a college may have its funding agreement with the FEFC qualified to prevent it increasing the number of new students in an unsatisfactory curriculum area until the FEFC is satisfied that weaknesses have been addressed.

Satisfactory provision may also be reinspected if actions have been taken to improve quality and the college's existing inspection grade is the only factor which prevents it from meeting the criteria for FEFC accreditation.

Reinspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Reinspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports and confirm that actions taken as a result of previous inspection have improved the quality of provision. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. The opinion of the FEFC's audit service contributes to inspectorate judgements about governance and management.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

Assessments use grades on a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses. The descriptors for the grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses*
- *grade 2 - good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses*
- *grade 4 - less than satisfactory provision in which weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- *grade 5 - poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.*

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

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Bradford College
Yorkshire and Humberside Region

Reinspection of basic skills: March 2001

Background

Bradford College was inspected in February 2000 and the inspection findings were recorded in college inspection report 64/00. The basic skills provision was awarded a grade 4.

The strengths of the provision were: good quality learning resources in the communication and mathematics workshops; provision in community venues that encourages participation. The weaknesses were: the high proportion of less than satisfactory teaching; the low proportion of students achieving a qualification; lack of summative records of achievement for students without qualification aims; inappropriate learning goals for some students; insufficient co-ordination of basic skills provision across the college.

The provision was reinspected over three days in March 2001. Inspectors observed 11 classes and held meetings with teachers. Discussions also took place with students in class. Inspectors examined a range of students' work, reviewed the resources available and scrutinised college documentation including the college's action plan to address the weaknesses identified at the last inspection.

Assessment

The college has taken concerted action to address the weaknesses identified during the last inspection. Inspectors confirmed that the quality of teaching and learning has improved. The proportion of lessons graded good has risen from 40% at the last inspection to 55%. No lessons were judged outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers frequently checked and reinforced students' learning and understanding. Well-designed worksheets maintained students' interest; reading, writing, oral and numeracy skills were appropriately developed in line with individual action plans. For example, a lesson in the communications workshop required students to compose an electronic mail, helping to develop their writing skills and use IT productively in order to support learning. Progress has been made to standardise lesson plans and schemes of work across college and community centre locations. In the best practice, good use is made of the proformas and includes reference to assessment methods. The majority of teachers are now completing and using individual learning programme forms. Two lessons were still less than satisfactory. In these lessons, students were not properly supported by teachers, skills were not adequately developed, lesson time was not productively used. Attendance in the lessons observed was on occasions, poor. Sometimes, the lack of support workers impedes students' progress. There were a number of examples where the marking of students' work was insufficiently detailed with little feedback to students on their progress. There has been some improvement in students' achievements since the last inspection with a small increase in the number of students successfully entered for external accreditation. Much of the achievement data supplied by the college, however, proved unreliable. In some literacy lessons, students were unaware of the availability of accreditation opportunities; in other cases, students had been attending for many years but had made little progress. The internal standardisation and moderation procedures for college-designed courses are underdeveloped.

As reported during the last inspection, good-quality learning resources exist in the college's communications and mathematics workshops. Resources in community venues are

satisfactory; although laptop computers are available, little use was made of them in some lessons.

Basic skills provision across the college is now centrally co-ordinated; this has resulted in more effective dissemination of identified good practice and more consistent delivery of teaching across the college. The college received £40,000 from the standards fund in October 2000 to support a programme of development in classroom and teacher practice, with a particular reference to basic skills. It was too early to assess the impact of this funding on basic skills teaching practice at the time of the reinspection.

Revised grade: basic skills 3.